

## **ABSTRACT**

The present invention relates to means for the detection and characterization of nucleic acid sequences, as well as variations in nucleic acid sequences. The present invention also relates to improved cleavage means for the detection and characterization of nucleic acid sequences. Structure-specific nucleases derived from a variety of thermostable organisms are provided. These structure-specific nucleases are used to cleave target-dependent cleavage structures, thereby indicating the presence of specific nucleic acid sequences or specific variations thereof.

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